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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 004133

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV TU CY

SUBJECT: ERDOGAN IN CYPRUS: DO NO HARM

REF: NICOSIA 1099

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Ambassador raised the issue of Turkish PM Erdogan's visit to Turkish Cyprus July 20 in separate conversations July 14 with PM Foreign Affairs Advisor Davutoglu, MFA U/S Tuygen, Deputy U/S and lead Cyprus negotiator Apakan, and FM Gul. Ambassador said that we regard Gambari's progress earlier this month as very significant and positive. It opens new possibilities for moving forward on various Cyprus fronts. We believe it is important that the effort succeed. Erdogan's visit therefore comes at an important and sensitive time. Ambassador urged that Erdogan find ways strongly to express support for Gambari's initiative and for Talat. A forthcoming gesture toward the Greek Cypriots, even a relatively small one, would be very timely and could help Turkey in European public opinion. While we understand the domestic political backdrop for Erdogan, the less harsh rhetoric there is, especially on trade and ports, the smaller will the prospects for undermining what Gambari has achieved or alienating Europeans who may see Gambari's efforts as a possible way out of the trade/ports conundrum.

¶2. (C) Ambassador also noted that EUR DAS Matt Bryza would be in Cyprus in coming days and promised to try to give a readout and any suggestions on key messages prior to Erdogan's departure.

¶3. (C) The Turks stressed Turkey's strong support for Gambari and Talat. They said that Erdogan would give strong backing to both. Gul said he had encouraged Gambari when he visited Ankara earlier this month. Davutoglu observed that Erdogan will have to reiterate his policy on trade and ports; failure to do so would be read as weakness. Ambassador urged again that the reiterations be as few as possible and that Erdogan find ways to also be and appear to be conciliatory. Apakan told Ambassador that he had gotten the message about a forthcoming gesture from others and that Turkey is considering this. He claimed that Erdogan will be measured in his public remarks.

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WILSON